

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 23, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to urge you to include the purchase of seafood products in the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) commodity purchasing program. We are extremely disappointed by the recent proposed solicitation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that omits seafood products, like squid, flounder, scup, skate, haddock, butterfish, dogfish, and shellfish.

The seafood industry is critical to the Rhode Island economy and helps sustain economic activity across the entire region. The Rhode Island seafood industry generates \$538.3 million gross sales and supports 4,381 jobs. Nationally, more than 68% of the \$102.2 billion that consumers paid for U.S. fishery products in 2017 was spent at food service establishments. Due to efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which has led to a near total shutdown of restaurants and other outlets serving fresh seafood, the supply chain of Rhode Island fisherman and seafood processors has been decimated.

We strongly encourage USDA to purchase surplus commercial seafood that can be supplied to domestic organizations. Facilitating the purchase of seafood products would both ensure stability in this key sector of the Rhode Island economy and food for Americans in need.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter to our state and our constituents.

Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress